



*inspiring people to protect  
Bay Area birds since 1917*

April 17, 2008

Mayor Susan Golding  
Chair, MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force  
California Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed marine protected areas for the North Central Coast Region. On behalf of the thousands of members and supporters of Golden Gate Audubon, I ask you to select Package 4 as the preferred alternative.

Golden Gate Audubon is deeply concerned about protecting our marine and coastal areas, especially those areas used by birds for nesting, foraging, and resting. Bird watching is part of an \$85 billion industry in the US and contributes substantially to the economy of California. Please ensure that important bird areas along our coast and in our state waters are protected by creating marine protected areas that are science-based and that incorporate ecosystem management principles. The needs of a broad range of stakeholders can be best met when the most significant natural resources are protected.

We support the network of marine protected areas in Package 4 for the North Central Coast Region of the Marine Life Protection Act. We ask the Blue Ribbon Task Force to select Package 4 as your preferred alternative. Any final package selected as the preferred alternative should include marine protected areas that incorporate areas important to birds, especially declining, threatened, or endangered species. Likewise, we support environmentally-sensitive wildlife watching in marine protected areas so that the public can continue to understand and enjoy the resources we all hope to protect.

Golden Gate Audubon supports strong protection for areas like the Farallon Islands that are critical breeding and foraging habitat for seabirds. We are especially concerned that forage fish populations, such as juvenile rockfish, be protected from overexploitation because those fish contribute to 30 to 70 percent of the diet of Pigeon Guillemots, Pelagic Cormorants, Brandt's Cormorants, Common Murres, and Rhinoceros Auklets.

We would like to see more areas protected that are critical to seabirds and shorebirds. Any changes to Package 4 should include consideration of a wider ranger of bird species than included in the documents that reviewed bird issues. Endangered species like the Marbled



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Murrelet also need protection that could be achieved through marine protected areas. Overall, Golden Gate Audubon would encourage a stronger evaluation of the ecosystem benefits to birds along our coasts both in terms of protecting forage fish species and critical habitats since so many bird populations are declining. We need to rethink our ocean management to do as much for species above the waves as we do below.

Similarly, Golden Gate Audubon would encourage greater consideration of the substantial contributions to the California economy that comes from wildlife viewing, especially bird watching. Frequently, the discussion of ocean ecosystem management focuses on commercial and recreational fishing issues without enough emphasis on the other economic factors that are affected by marine protected areas. When marine reserves help the entire ecosystem to thrive, the most visible sign of that success are the birds we see and the marine mammals that surface.

Marine protected areas, especially fully protected marine reserves, are needed to ensure healthy coastal waters, which support coastal communities and our state economy. Scientific studies confirm that marine reserves protect marine biodiversity. Marine reserves will benefit species like birds that depend on forage fish species that are protected in marine reserves and that use also marine protected areas as sanctuaries for breeding and resting. Not only will our underwater resources benefit, but so will the complete ecosystem, if fully protected marine reserves are implemented.

Please ensure the future of California's ocean and coasts by recommending Package 4 as the preferred alternative.

Thank you,

Eli Saddler  
Conservation Director